

Indiana's Smallpox Preparedness Plan Adds New Objective: Recruiting Volunteer Vaccinators

As implementation of Indiana's Smallpox Preparedness Plan continues, the Indiana State Department of Health is working on a new objective: recruiting health professionals to volunteer for training as smallpox vaccinators.

State Health Commissioner Greg Wilson, M.D. says that Indiana has made good progress in being prepared to provide medical care and to conduct field investigations of smallpox cases in the unlikely event of a release.

According to Dr. Wilson, although the risk of a smallpox outbreak is low, the consequences of an outbreak would be so high that Indiana must be able to perform large-scale smallpox vaccinations in an emergency. If cases of smallpox should occur in Indiana, most of those who have already been vaccinated will be caring for patients in hospitals or will be out in the field investigating the outbreak, and would not be available to vaccinate.

To meet this objective, health professionals are asked to volunteer for training as smallpox vaccinators. These volunteers do not need to be vaccinated to receive the training. Health care professionals include nurses, dentists, physician assistants, paramedics, and advanced emergency medical technicians.

Health professionals who wish to volunteer as vaccinators should contact their local health department, preferably by fax. A contact list of Indiana local health department offices can be found on the Indiana State Department of Health Web site at <http://www.in.gov/isdh> (click on "Public Health Links"), along with a form that can be filled out online or faxed to the local health department. Training sessions will be scheduled as soon as possible.

Those who wish to volunteer are encouraged to contact their local health departments beginning Friday, March 21.

The vaccinators trained for this new objective will be offered vaccinations prior to fulfilling their role as smallpox vaccinators, but would need to be vaccinated only in the event of a smallpox outbreak. It is anticipated that a mass vaccination process would take approximately 10 days and volunteers would be needed for all or part of that time.

"We can implement this new objective while completing Phase One efforts already underway. These volunteers will be no less prepared because they're not vaccinated in advance," Dr. Wilson said. "In addition to the public health and medical response teams we've currently established, this new objective will provide Indiana with further readiness capacity in the case of an emergency."

As of March 27, 765 volunteers have been vaccinated, including 229 from public health response teams, 524 from health care response teams, and 12 from other areas. There were 34 hospitals represented in Indiana. The "take" rate of vaccination among Indiana vaccinees is 95%. These smallpox vaccination statistics will be updated regularly in upcoming issues of the *Indiana Epidemiology Newsletter*.

Current Smallpox Vaccination Status as of March 27, 2003			
Number Vaccinated		Percent Evaluated	
Total # vaccinated	765	% of vaccinees evaluated for take response	62%
Total # vaccinated in public health response teams	229	% of vaccinees with major take response	95%
Total # vaccinated in health care response teams	524		
Total # vaccinated, other	12	Number hospitals represented in Indiana	36